WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for tracking content communicated over a network, comprising:

receiving at least one message and associated content from an originator of the content over the network;

associating watermark data with the content to provide watermarked content;

registering the watermarked content to record an association of the watermarked content with the originator of the watermarked content;

monitoring for subsequent transmission of the watermarked content over the network to identify the originator of the watermarked content; and

maintaining a content transmission count for each of the originators of the watermarked content that is transmitted over the network.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising forwarding statistics including at least an identity of the originator of the watermarked content and the corresponding content transmission count to a server, and presenting the forwarded statistics via a site hosted by the server.

3. The method of Claim 2, wherein maintaining a content transmission count for each of the originators of the watermarked content comprises maintaining the content transmission count for a plurality of originators of watermarked content, and wherein presenting the forwarded statistics comprises presenting the forwarded statistics in an order based on a relative quantity of transmissions of the plurality of originators of the watermarked content.

4. The method of Claim 1, further comprising generating a bonus for the originator of the watermarked content based at least in part on the content transmission count.

1   5.   The method of Claim 4, wherein generating a bonus comprises any one or

2   more of providing the originator of the registered content with a reduced network access

3   charge, free network access, a prize, a monetary reward, or publicity.

1   6.   The method of Claim 1, wherein associating watermark data with the

2   content comprises embedding electronically perceivable data into the content.

1   7.   The method of Claim 1, wherein associating watermark data with the

2   content comprises:

3   encrypting at least some attributes of the content to provide encrypted data;

4   hashing at least some of the attributes of the content to provide a machine

5   authentication code (MAC); and

6   executing a watermark algorithm using the content, the encrypted data, and

7   the MAC as inputs to the watermark algorithm.

1   8.   The method of Claim 7, wherein executing the watermark algorithm

2   comprises deriving a bit pattern from the content, encrypted data, and MAC, and inserting

3   the bit pattern into the content.

1   9.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising including detection data with

2   the watermarked content, and wherein monitoring for subsequent transmission of the

3   watermarked content comprises detecting the detection data, and verifying the watermark

4   data for the watermarked content that includes the detection data.

1   10.   The method of Claim 9, wherein detecting the detection data comprises

2   detecting the detection data at a message routing entity, and further comprising forwarding

3   watermarked content that includes the detection data to a message tracking system.

1   11.   The method of Claim 10, wherein the at least one message comprises a

2   Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) message, and wherein detecting the detection data

3   at a message routing entity comprises detecting the detection data at an Multimedia

4   Messaging Service Center (MMSC).

1   12.   The method of Claim 9, wherein verifying the watermark data comprises

2   verifying the watermark data at the message tracking system.

1   13.   The method of Claim 1, wherein monitoring for subsequent transmission of

2   the watermarked content comprises detecting the watermarked content transmitted over the

3   network, and verifying the watermark data.

1   14.   The method of Claim 13, wherein verifying the watermark data comprises:

2   extracting the watermark data from the watermarked content;

3   comparing at least some of the extracted watermark data to a plurality of

4   associations of watermarked content and corresponding content originators; and

5   designating the watermark data as verified if the extracted watermark data

6   corresponds to any of the plurality of associations of watermarked content and

7   corresponding content originators.

1   15.   The method of Claim 14, further comprising decrypting the extracted

2   watermark data, and wherein comparing at least some of the extracted watermark data to a

3   plurality of associations of watermarked content and corresponding content originators

4   comprises comparing at least some of the decrypted watermark data to the plurality of

5   associations of watermarked content and corresponding content originators.

1   16.   The method of Claim 1, wherein registering the content comprises storing at

2   least the association of the watermarked content with the originator of the watermarked

3   content in a registration database.

1   17.   The method of Claim 1, wherein receiving at least one message and

2   associated content comprises receiving, as an intermediary, a message originating from a

3   first user targeted for at least one other user.

1   18.   The method of Claim 1, wherein receiving at least one message and

2   associated content comprises receiving, as an addressee, the message and associated

3   content from the originator of the content, and further comprising returning registered,

4   watermarked content to the originator of the content.

1   19.   The method of Claim 1, wherein:

2   receiving at least one message and associated content comprises receiving

3   the message and associated content from the originator of the content at a web server via a

4   web browsing session;

5   associating watermark data with the content comprises associating the

6   watermark data with the content at the web server;

7   registering the watermarked content comprises receiving and registering the

8   watermarked content at a message tracking system; and

9   monitoring for subsequent transmission of the watermarked content

10   comprises monitoring for subsequent transmission of the watermarked content at the

11   message tracking system.

1   20.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising creating the content via user

2   equipment of the originator of the content.

1   21.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising uploading the content to user

2   equipment of the originator of the content.

1   22.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the message and associated content are

2   received by any of a Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) message, Enhanced

3   Messaging Service (EMS) message, Short Message Service (SMS), Smart Message, or

4   electronic mail (e-mail) message.

1   23.   A method for tracking content communicated via Multimedia Messaging

2   Service (MMS) messages over a network, comprising:

3   receiving MMS messages communicated over the network at a Multimedia

4 Messaging Service Center (MMSC);

5   forwarding the MMS messages to a message tracking system;

6   associating a watermark with content provided via the MMS messages to

7 generate watermarked content at the message tracking system;

8   registering the watermarked content at the message tracking system to

9 record an association of the watermarked content with an originator of the watermarked

10 content;

11   monitoring for subsequent MMS transmission of the watermarked content

12 over the network to identify the originator of the watermarked content; and

13   maintaining a content transmission count for each of the originators of the

14 watermarked content that is transmitted over the network.

1   24. A message tracking system coupled to receive messages and associated

2 content from a message routing entity over a network, the message tracking system

3 comprising:

4   a processing system;

5   a watermarking module operable via the processing system and configured

6 to associate watermark data with the content to generate watermarked content;

7   a registration module operable via the processing system and configured to

8 register the watermarked content as being received at the message tracking system;

9   a watermark verification module operable via the processing system and

10 configured to recognize watermarked content that has been previously registered; and

11   wherein the registration module tracks a number of times in which the

12 previously registered watermarked content has been received at the message tracking

13 system for each originator of the watermark data.

1   25. A system for tracking content communicated via messaging between

2 devices operable on a network, comprising:

3   a message center coupled to the network to receive messages and associated

4 content from message source devices targeted for one or more message destination

5 devices;

6   a message tracking system coupled to receive the messages and associated

7 content from the message center, the message tracking system comprising:

8   a processing system;

9   a watermarking module operable via the processing system and

10 configured to associate watermark data with the content to generate watermarked

11 content;

12   a registration module operable via the processing system and

13 configured to register the watermarked content as being received at the message

14 tracking system;

15   a watermark verification module operable via the processing system

16 and configured to recognize watermarked content that has been previously

17 registered; and

18   wherein the registration module tracks a number of times in which

19 the previously registered watermarked content has been received at the message

20 tracking system for each originator of the watermark data.

1   26.   The system of Claim 25, wherein the messages and associated content

2 comprise Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) messages, and wherein the message

3 center comprises at least one Multimedia Messaging Service Center (MMSC).

1   27.   The system of Claim 26, wherein the watermarking module is further

2 configured to associate detection data with the content.

1   28.   The system of Claim 27, wherein the at least one MMSC comprises a

2 detection module to identify content having the detection data, and to forward messages

3 having the detection data from the message source devices to the message tracking system.

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1   29.   The system of Claim 25, wherein the message tracking system is configured

2   to forward the messages and associated content to the message center upon completion of

3   processing by the message tracking system, and wherein the message center is configured

4   to deliver the messages and associated content to the one or more message destination

5   devices.

1   30.   The system of Claim 25, wherein the message tracking system further

2   comprises a bonus generation module operable via the processing system and configured

3   to generate a bonus for originators of the content based on the number of times in which

4   the previously registered watermarked content has been received at the message tracking

5   system.

1   31.   The system of Claim 25, wherein the system further comprises a server

2   coupled to the message tracking system and configured to host a site to present statistics

3   for at least some of the originators of the content, wherein the statistics include at least the

4   number of times in which the previously registered watermarked content has been received

5   at the message tracking system.

1   32.   The system of Claim 31, wherein the server comprises one of a World Wide

2   Web (WWW) server or a Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) server.

1   33.   A computer-readable medium having instructions stored thereon which are

2   executable by a computer system for tracking content communicated over a network by

3   performing steps comprising:

4   receiving at least one message and associated content from an originator of

5   the content over the network;

6   associating watermark data with the content to provide watermarked

7   content;

8   registering the watermarked content to record an association of the

9   watermarked content with the originator of the watermarked content;

10   monitoring for subsequent transmission of the watermarked content over the

11   network to identify the originator of the watermarked content; and

12   maintaining a content transmission count for each of the originators of the

13   watermarked content that is transmitted over the network.

1   34.   A message tracking system coupled to receive Multimedia Messaging

2   Service (MMS) messages and associated content from a Multimedia Messaging Service

3   Center (MMSC) over a network, the message tracking system comprising:

4   means for associating a watermark with the content to provide watermarked

5   content;

6   means for registering the watermarked content to record an association of

7   the watermarked content with an originator of the watermarked content;

8   means for identifying subsequent transmission of the watermarked content

9   over the network and for identifying the originator of the watermarked content; and

10   means for maintaining a content transmission count for each of the

11   originators of the watermarked content that is transmitted over the network.

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